

The Ultimate Priority - Worship . . . Part 1

UNACCEPTABLE WORSHIP Selected Scriptures

STIMULATE

** As members of the human race, we all share in common one particular pastime. If we are the CEO of General Motors or an unemployed tenant living in a Federal Housing Project, we all prioritize our day. This can be done overtly, as we set the priorities of each day or it can be done by default because we are too lazy to make any plan for our life. Either way, we are indeed setting the priorities for our life.

The question then becomes, "What is the **ultimate priority** in the life of one who belongs to this thing we call the human race?"

Over the next 6 weeks we will answer that question from a Biblical perspective as we strive to learn how to set our priorities for the glory of God!

MOTIVATE

** As we now embark upon this new series entitled, "**The Ultimate Priority - Worship**", our hearts will learn to develop a passion to worship the Lord in spirit and truth. Worship has been a much misunderstood and misapplied topic, ever since man has considered the reality of God. In this series we are going to learn what the Word of God has to say about true worship. For today, we are going to begin by observing what the Bible calls "**Unacceptable Worship**".

(Jeremiah 6:20, Amos 5:21-22) Have we ever offered to God that which is unacceptable in our effort to worship Him? The answer is probably yes!

In this six part series, we are going to learn together about:

UNACCEPTABLE WORSHIP - Selected Scriptures

WORSHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE - Selected Scriptures

WORSHIPPING THE FATHER - Matthew 6:9-15

WORSHIPPING THE SON - John 9:1-41

WORSHIPPING THE SPIRIT - Galatians 5:22-26

THE WORSHIP PERSPECTIVE - Psalm 34:1-22

Opening Prayer

Unacceptable Worship

INVESTIGATE

The fact that mankind, the creature, has worshipped in an unacceptable manner, the One who created him and gave him life, is an old and very established reality. Today, we are going to learn four types of "**Unacceptable Worship**" in our effort to pursue "**The Ultimate Priority - Worship**".

1. WORSHIP OF FALSE GODS

** How do you suppose God feels about His creation being involved in the worship of false Gods?

He hates it! It is an abomination to Him. Let's look back at a time when God was restoring Israel.

Exodus 34:1-17 (V.1-7) (V. 8-12) (V. 13-17) Note: The goddess Asherah is mentioned again in 1Kings 18:19, where her prophets and those of Baal fight against Elijah and all die.

Remember, God is a jealous God and hates spiritual harlotry that would worship a false God!
cf. V.14 with Exodus 20:4-5, Deuteronomy 4:24, 5:9, 6:15; Joshua 24:19-20; Ezekiel 39:25, and Nahum 1:2.

** Why is that? What is at stake from God's perspective?

His glory!

Isaiah 48:11 "For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; for how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another."

** Is mankind really inclined to worship false gods?

Absolutely! While we are aware that God does exist, we would rather make up our own god than meet the one true God on His terms. Turn with me to Romans, chapter one and let's see just how true that is...

Romans 1:16-23

V.16-17

** How powerful is the gospel of God?

It is the power that brings about salvation to all of those who would believe! It reveals the righteousness of God that we can receive by faith.

V.18 ** What is it that caused God to reveal His wrath?

Men who suppress The Truth in unrighteousness.

V.19 ** How did these men become aware of the truth that they are suppressing?

"...God [Himself] made it evident to them"

V.20 ** What did God use to make Himself known to man?

The creation.

** What three things can be learned about God from observing the majesty of His creation?

"...His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature..."

V.21-23

** Did mankind honor God for who He is?

No! They did not honor Him or give thanks, instead they exchanged His glory for the glory of false gods.

** Remember how jealously God protects His glory, what is God's judgment upon those who reject Him?

V.24 - God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts...

V.26 - God gave them over to degrading passions...

V.28 - God gave them over to a depraved mind...

So the first type of "**Unacceptable Worship**" is the worship of false gods, let's move on to the second...

2. WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD IN A WRONG FORM

** Israel again serves as an example of this error. Do you recall a time when they worshipped the true God, but had reduced Him to an image formed by man?

Yes, just prior to receiving the Ten Commandments, Israel turned to worship the golden calf. Join me in Exodus 32:1-8.

Read Passage - (V. 1-3) (V. 4-6) (V. 7-8) cf. Verses 4 and 8, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!" They were worshipping the true God who had delivered them from Egyptian slavery, but they reduced Him to an erroneous form.

** How important is it that we not reduce Almighty God to some form or image which is beneath His glory?

It remains of the utmost importance, which is why Moses would further instruct Israel in Deuteronomy 4:12-19.

** How are we today tempted to worship the true God in the wrong form?

By creating and worshipping a mental form of Him.

"If you think of God as an old man with a beard sitting in a chair--that's unacceptable. Idolatry does not begin with a sculptor's hammer, it begins with the mind. When we think of God, what should we visualize? Absolutely nothing. No visual conception of God could properly represent His eternal glory. That may be why God is described as light. It is not possible to make a statue of light." (John MacArthur)

Now let's see the third form of "Unacceptable Worship"...

3. WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD IN A SELF-STYLED MANNER

** How many ways are there to approach God in worship?

Only one! cf. John 14:6 "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. Here are four examples of self-styled worship, which were displeasing to God.

Leviticus 10:1-2 Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons. Offering "strange fire" which was not from the altar, as prescribed by God in Leviticus 6:9-13. Also, the context indicates that they were probably drunk at the time. (Leviticus 10:8-9)

1Samuel 13:8-14 Saul took over the role of a priest and offered a self-styled sacrifice, which was rejected and judged. cf. 1Samuel 10:8 with 1Samuel 13:13

2Samuel 6:1-7 Uzzah got creative in how he should carry the Arc of God, in direct disobedience to God's instruction in Numbers 4:4-6 and 15. As a result he died (V.7).

Matthew 15:1-9 The Pharisees set aside the commandments of God in order to honor their own traditions. Instead of honoring their mother and father, they claimed to have given in pledge their financial resources to God.

All of this amounts to "**Unacceptable Worship**" and is still happening today. The apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks **through Him** to God the Father." (Colossians 3:17)

The only worship that the Father will accept, is that which comes through a saving faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. Further, it is to be in accordance with all that Jesus has commanded.

Finally, the fourth type of "**Unacceptable Worship**"...

4. WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD, IN THE RIGHT WAY, WITH A WRONG ATTITUDE - HYPOCRISY

** Is it possible to worship God, in accordance with His Word, but all the time holding a sinful attitude?

Yes! Again, Israel repeatedly did this!

Isaiah 1:10-15, Hosea 6:4-6, Amos 5:21-24 and Malachi 1:6-8

But not just Israel, even the church herself was guilty of this hypocrisy.

1Corinthians 11:17-18, Philippians 4:1-3, 1Peter 3:8-9

** As we pursue "**The Ultimate Priority - Worship**", what is to be the overall characteristic of that worship?

Love! Our love for God, our love for Jesus Christ, our love for the Holy Spirit and our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Please join me in 1John, chapter 3, as we bring our study to a conclusion.

1John 3:14 "...because we love the brethren..."

1John 3:18 "...let us love...in deed and truth..."

1John 4:7 "...everyone who loves is born of God"

1John 4:12 "...if we love one another, God abides"

1John 4:20 "...the one who does not love his brother...cannot love God..."

1John 4:21 "...the one who loves God should love his brother also."

EXTRICATE

** What were the four types of "**Unacceptable Worship**"?

1. WORSHIP OF FALSE GODS

2. WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD IN A WRONG FORM

3. WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD IN A SELF-STYLED MANNER

4. WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD, IN THE RIGHT WAY, WITH A WRONG ATTITUDE - HYPOCRISY

DELINEATE

** Of these four listed in our study today, which one are we most likely to get caught up in?

Number four, worshipping God by going through all of the right motions while maintaining a sinful attitude at the same time.

EVALUATE

** Since you have seen that this kind of worship is not acceptable to our God, what should you do with any attitude that gets in the way of you worshipping in spirit and truth?

Confess it to the Lord as sin, ask for forgiveness and repent or leave it behind.
cf. Matthew 5:23-24

ACTIVATE

** Is it possible to present to God worship which is acceptable?

Yes, that is why the apostle Paul "urged" us to do just that! cf. Romans 12:1

** Will you go before the Lord right now and ask Him to forgive any form of "**Unacceptable Worship**" that you might have offered to Him in the past and to equip you to worship Him in spirit and in truth, both now and in the future?

Closing Prayer